

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**A CASE STUDY OF FOUR BEGINNING
TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE, WORKPLACE
CHALLENGES AND SUPPORT RECEIVED IN THE
FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyse the beginning teachers' experience, the challenges met and the support received in the first year of real classroom teaching. It also sought to exploit on how support and assistance could be given to help them function as new members in the school culture.

The respondents consisted of four KPLI English language beginning teachers from four districts in Kelantan. The respondents were purposively selected and they also were the graduates of the same teachers training college in the East Coast. The respondents' views and answers were obtained through an in-depth semi-structured interview phased within the limited duration of two weeks. The data were analyzed qualitatively and presented thematically.

The findings showed that even at an early stage of their career, some concerns had already surfaced from beginning teachers because of the pure desire to give optimum input and total commitment to the profession. The revelation was very useful in understanding the beginning teachers' apprehension about the profession in relation to certain issues that took place in schools.

Lessons learned from this research will be useful for future professional teacher development programmes. The suggestions made by the beginning teachers are worth looking into, especially by the school administrators and educational experts and specialists in order to improve the education of the country.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

In qualitative research paradigms, researchers do not detach themselves from their reports; they make clear their existence in their interpretation and writing. This pertains to the beliefs that “ knowledge is always constructed relative to a framework’ to a form of representation’ to a cultural code and to a personal biography” (Eisner, 1992, p. 14). Research practices are neither neutral nor natural. Our knowledge is “both personally and socially constructed” (Simon, 1996, p. 232). In studying various educational issues in which we witness positive changes, the adoption of qualitative research strategies is making its identity felt especially in various education journals. As a novice researcher in the educational field, the struggle to find one’s “voice” (Garman, 1994) is always present in writing up the research paper. An awareness of one’s individual experience, beliefs and perceptions shapes the focus and conclusion of the final work. In this research paper, a case study of four beginning teachers’ experiences; workplace challenges and support received in the first year of teaching in schools have been the focus of the researcher in seeking a better understanding of the reality of the teaching profession for newly appointed teachers.

A lot has been said about the feelings and experiences of newly appointed teachers. Feeling of inadequacy and uncertainty is actually common amongst novice teachers as their career is in its budding stage and the tendency of experiencing and adapting to new teaching environment is indeed overwhelming. This is especially so for new teachers teaching English as a second language, in our Malaysian context. One always wonders at the end of the day if these young teachers benefited at all from what was taught to them. The journey of primary school teachers is often wrought with despair and frustration but it is believed that through support and encouragement from families and senior as well as experienced teachers, the new

teachers will be able to move on to improve themselves professionally and academically. They also go through structured courses, workshops and seminars that would enrich their knowledge related to the profession. The career of the beginning teachers is a long and winded journey which should be well supported.

The challenges faced by new teachers in the new teaching environment are abundant. Thus for new English language teachers especially those who are eager to perform and are trying hard to encourage their students to have confidence and the courage to use the English language, the anxiety to see immediate positive effect is indeed daunting. Teaching can sometimes be frustrating as it needs teachers to exercise a lot of tolerance and patience in imparting knowledge. For the new teachers, this condition might lead them to question their effectiveness as academicians. Most beginning teachers hope that they would be able to make a good or even an excellent start in their career but the reality of what actually exists and happens in schools is something that they would have to learn to adapt and adopt.

In Malaysia, teachers undergo specific and systematic training in teachers' training colleges and local universities pertaining to teaching school children before they are certified and sent to schools. The teaching pedagogy, methodology and strategies taught while in training plus the practicum experiences are considered prerequisite to become teachers. Experienced trainers and lecturers expose these pre-service teacher trainees to all the necessary skills and theories of education and teaching to prepare them to face real classroom teaching. It is hoped that the knowledge gained and tapped while undergoing training will be fully utilized and passed down by new teachers to their students as they enter the teaching profession.

Society has high expectations of the teachers to shape the future generation. Hence teacher trainers and lecturers are compelled to fulfill societal expectations, equipping trainee teachers with the necessary skills for teaching. One of the challenges the teachers' training colleges is to produce effective, dedicated and responsible teachers with high moral values